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CASTORIA

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Lucille Love

(Continued from Page 2.)

dream and now it despite her utmost efforts. Even in the effort to waken, unsuccessful though it was, she seemed to recognize the calm, imperturbable, businesslike features of Thompson. Then she felt a sensation of ease and comfort and peace such as had not been hers for a long time, and she allowed herself to drift away upon the gentle flowing river that hummed its song in her ears.

She awakened to find herself being shaken violently by the conductor and a porter, whose ebony face had changed to a saffron shade. Her head ached so fearfully that she pressed her feverish palms to her temples to keep it from bursting. Her throat and mouth felt as though she had been subsisting upon a diet of cotton soaked in oil.

She staggered to her feet and stood, dazed and bewildered, in the aisle of the car. The conductor turned her over to two women, who stood with her upon the platform, supporting her trembling figure while the fresh air drove away the fumes of chloroform and gas to which she had been subjected.

First she felt the rush of the train, the dotting of lights in the distance, the rush of the train past the lights, only to come upon a new cluster. And she was rushing, rushing, rushing, just like these lights to a cavernous blackness which she could not describe even to herself.

Suddenly the reason for her being upon the train came to her, and her hands sought her breast, then her throat. With a little cry she staggered back into the arms of the women.

"Robbed!" she gasped. "I have been robbed!"

The women looked at one another pityingly, then incredulously and finally believing as they caught the pallor and sanity on the girl's face. Summoning all her strength, she turned the knob of the door and sought the conductor. He looked incredulous at the girl's charge, but investigation showed that the light had been tampered with. Nothing, however, could be done before reaching San Francisco except a search of the car.

Lucille went with him from place to place, scanning every face. But she knew who had done this thing. When she fought against the fingers of the drugs they had been the fingers of Thompson. When she had slipped from peaceful slumber into the drug stupor it was Thompson she had been bravely fighting.

But Thompson—where had he disappeared? What had become of the man?

"We know who the thief was, miss," reported the conductor a little later. "He had the compartment facing your section. The screen is cut out. He must have dropped out the window after working his game."

Lucille smiled faintly. "A medium sized man, rather dark, plainly dressed, with features that nobody would notice especially and a livid scar across the side of his face," she murmured.

The man looked at her in surprise. "Thompson," she murmured. "Yes; it was Thompson. I was positive from the first."

As the conductor corroborated her description of the thief she lay back against the dusty cushions of her seat idly watching the train chugging across the landscape. She had started badly, but she clutched her teeth firmly. Her purpose was firm as ever, her rage a bit higher.

Hugo Loubeque cursed profoundly to himself as he paced up and down the floor of his San Francisco house. From below came the sounds of his servants searching into every nook and cranny of the mysterious house for the packet of papers and documents he knew Lucille had hidden here.

He frowned heavily as he went to the window and looked down upon the street, deserted now save for the old woman who trudged toward the place. She carried a basket of fruit over her arm and Loubeque smiled grimly as she disappeared from his sight, then reappeared after being turned away from the door by the servant.

As he idly studied the woman something about her caught and held his attention. She moved slowly, but there was an affection about that slow movement.

Loubeque's eyes were fastened, like those of a hawk now, upon the old woman. She had stopped beside the alarm box on the corner lamp post. Suddenly the bent form straightened and he read the impulsive resolve of youth in every movement of the old woman. Her hand groped upon the ground. He saw her pick up a stone and smash the fire alarm.

Came the sound of fire engines rolling down the street. Loubeque watched the woman. She dashed toward the captain as he darted up in his light buggy, pointing eagerly toward the house of the spy. Her eyes glowing with excitement. Then Loubeque smiled as he pressed a bell and ordered the search to stop immediately.

Before the rush of firemen with their hose the door opened. Their heavy feet stamped upon the stairs, throughout the house. But Loubeque did not move. He watched Lucille as she tossed aside the habiliments she had worn over her girlish clothes. She looked swiftly about to make certain no one was in sight. Then she swiftly approached the extra trunk upon which the stickers and hats of the firemen were laid. Once more she looked about her, then lunged forward into a long rubber coat and jammed a helmet over her head.

Swiftly Loubeque peered over the stairs. Without an instant's hesitation Lucille had sped to the basement. He tiptoed to the room that had been assigned her when he held her captive here. Pressing a button, one wall of the room opened. He peered below, watching her as, below, she searched feverishly for the papers.

Loubeque quietly moved back to his own room. Slowly his fingers reached out. Came a slight clink of machinery. Then the spy stepped below and received the assurance of the fire captain that everything was well. His smile was that of a man quite positive that everything was more than well.

CHAPTER XIX.

An Appeal.

LUCILLE started just as her hands encountered the packet of begrimed papers and documents. A faint humming sound mingled with the heavy tread of the firemen above stairs. But she had won, was victorious after many defeats. Still, that sound—

She seemed to have heard it before. With a little cry of horror she looked up, her hands clasping the packet to her breast. The room that had been her boudoir was slowly closing down upon her, was moving down, down, down, its dark floor threatening to crush her like a letterpress closes upon its contents. Then it stopped.

She looked toward the door through which she had entered, her delight at



She Saw Loubeque in the Doorway.

the escape dying before the sight of Loubeque's tall, saturnine figure in the doorway, the glowing cigar tip pecking out his every feature, the hateful smile upon his face. He extended his hand, bowing gracefully, ironically.

"The packet of papers, Miss Lucille, if you please," he murmured.

For the fleeting second Lucille wondered what would happen did she refuse to surrender the papers to Loubeque—wondered what diabolical thing might enter his brain when he found himself defied. A glance at the room which had started to descend upon her drove the thought away as quickly as it brought a shudder through her slender frame. Slowly, reluctantly, she held out the packet to him, watching him furtively, as with the utmost courtesy he bowed and placed it in his breast pocket.

Slowly he conducted her up the stairs. In his private room he motioned her to a chair, seating himself at the desk.

"I am not going to threaten you again," he said quietly. "I wish you to know that this is the last time you can interfere with my plans. Child, can you not be made to see what folly it is—this fight against me?"

"Mr. Loubeque," she said softly, "have you never grieved that it is impossible for the finer feelings you are continually suppressing to be returned because your ambitions are cruel and base? I do not like to wage this constant war with you. I do not like to battle with the man who has been so kind to me in his own way that I could love him as another father. But you would ruin my father; you would wreck my sweetheart's life. You would keep me apart from perfect happiness after I have merely pecked through the door of that happiness only to have it slammed shut in my face. Can't you see that it is you who must go down to defeat? Can't you see that love such as supports a frail girl to battle with you as I have done will not be downed by the most powerful man? Can't you see that I cannot stop even if I do sometimes grow very tired and sick at heart and pray to this soul of mine to let me lie down for a little while and rest? Rest—rest!"

She broke off with a sob of the most acute distress. "There is no such word as rest for me. Always it is go on, go on, constantly go on, until it seems I must fall along the way. But I do not fall. I have won from you constantly; I have always won, and I shall always continue to win. And you know it, Mr. Loubeque, for I can see it on your face—now."

Like one inspired she was, as the halting tones of her plea changed to those of passionate conviction, a certainty that expressed itself in words tumbling from the tongue with utter abandon, words that seemed to come from other lips than her own. And as Loubeque looked back at the beautiful figure of the girl he was surprised to see that suddenly she seemed to have changed, that the slip of a child who had come on board the Emperor

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here in this very house. That was why I insisted upon a maid to serve me when I took the drug you put in the drink.

"Why did you not mention it at that time?" The spy's tones were dubious. "Because I did not wish you to know I had anything of such value about me."

"Value? You had no money when you left Manila."

"No, but I obtained possession of a wonderful ruby necklace in the cavern of the jungle just before I was rescued by the filibuster. Three nights ago when I boarded the train for here that man dragged me while I slept and stole the necklace from about my throat. Then he dropped out of the window of his compartment. That is why he was detained."

Loubeque fastened his cold eyes upon the butler. The man had nerves as steady as a rock. Lucille studied the judge and culprit earnestly. She could see that Thompson was beating down the spy's belief in her story. Swift as a dash, without a second's thought, she darted toward the thief. She had noticed his fingers involuntarily seek the right hand breast-pocket of his coat.

"I was delayed, sir," the butler began apologetically, when Loubeque lifted his hand imperatively.

"You were delayed," coldly repeated the spy, separating every syllable and noting it out as though it were a death judgment. "It is perhaps better that you were delayed, Thompson. I have just received a letter from a man with whom you are acquainted. In this letter, Thompson, he informs me he intends turning traitor to my interests, that he intends assisting Miss Love to make her escape."

"Quite so, sir," murmured the butler-thief.

"I am informed by him that he spied upon you while you cut through the bars of Miss Love's window."

Thompson did not stir, but Lucille saw the scar go a sickly white.

"The man lied, sir."

"Men do not lie at such moments."

For just a moment Thompson was silent. The hush upon the room was as profound as to make the ticking of Loubeque's watch strike upon the ears like mallet strokes. Slowly the butler's index finger moved to the scar upon his cheek.

"The man you speak of evidently did the work in the hope of releasing Miss Love. I guessed this ear while trying to prevent the flight, sir."

"It's a lie!" Lucille burst forth passionately. "That man tried to rob me



His Fingers Gripped Thompson's Throat.

when she made her charge. In one swift movement she had ripped open the coat. With the other hand she plunged toward the place she knew the necklace to be.

(Continued next week.)

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